



July 20, 2005
Military Oahu Star

Servicemember's Death Benefits Increase

U.S Department of Defense

WASHINGTON (NNS) – The Department of Defense announced a significant increase in the death gratuity for the survivors of servicemembers killed in action and the Service members' Group Life Insurance (SGLI) coverage for service members deployed to designated combat zones.

The Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense, the Global War on Terror and Tsunami Relief Act 2005 (Public Law 109-13) increases this immediate cash payment from \$12,420 to \$100,000 for survivors of those whose death is as a result of hostile actions and occurred in a designated combat operation or combat zone or while training for combat or performing hazardous duty.

The supplemental also increases the maximum amount of SGLI coverage from @250,000 to #400,000 for all servicemembers effective Sept. 1, 2005 and provides that the department will pay or reimburse the premiums to servicemembers who are deployed in a designated combat zone for \$150,000 of SGLI coverage.

Until the effective date for the SGLI increase, the supplemental provides for a special death gratuity of \$150,000, retroactive to Oct. 7, 2001, for survivors of those whose death is in a designated combat operation or combat zone or occurred while training for combat or performing hazardous duty.

The Secretary of Defense has designated all areas where servicemembers are in receipt of the combat zone tax exclusion as qualifying combat zones and all members deployed outside the United States on orders in support of Operation Enduring Freedom or Operation Iraqi Freedom as participating in qualifying combat operations.

Effective immediately, survivors of servicemembers who die in these qualifying zones or operations will receive the increased benefits.

The services will also identify eligible survivors of servicemembers who died in these designated zones and operations since Oct. 7, 2001 and begin making the retroactive payments within a few days.

The process of identifying all eligible beneficiaries and completing these retroactive payments will take several months.

Survivors of members who did not die in a designated combat operation or combat zone, but were training for combat or performing hazardous duty, will also qualify for the increased benefits.

Circumstances that qualify include: aerial flight, parachute duty, demolition duty, diving duty, war games, practice alerts, tactical exercises, leadership reaction courses, grenade and live fire exercises, hand-to-hand combat training, confidence and obstacle courses, accident involving a military vehicle or military weapon, exposure to toxic fumes or gas and explosion of military ordinance.

No amount of monetary compensation or level of assistance can replace a human life. However, it is our country's duty to recognize the loss of a service member with dignified and appropriate support for the family members left behind.

These death benefit enhancements recognize the direct sacrifice of life of those servicemembers placed in harm's way and in service to the nation.

All beneficiaries for retroactive payments will be contacted by mail or telephone. If someone is not contacted, but thinks he may be entitled to added benefits, he may inquire at the following addresses or telephone numbers:

Navy: Navy Personnel Command (PERS-62). Call toll-free 1-800-368-3202.

USMC: HQMC Casualty Office. Call toll-free 1-800-847-1597.

Army: Department of the Army Casualty Operations at toll-free 1-800-626-3317.

Air Force: Air Force Personnel Center Casualty Services Branch. Call toll-free 1-800-433-0048.

USCG: Coast Guard Personnel Services Center. Phone 785-339-3570.